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A Lover's Shame

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Abstract Shame is one of the more painful consequences of loving someone; my beloved's doing something immoral can cause me to be ashamed of her. The guiding thought behind this paper is that explaining this phenomenon can tell us something about what it means to love. The phenomenon of beloved-induced shame has been largely neglected by philosophers working on shame, most of whom conceive of shame as being a reflexive attitude. Bennett Helm has recently suggested that in order to account for beloved-induced shame, we should deny the reflexivity of shame. After arguing that Helm's account is inadequate, I proceed to develop an account of beloved-induced shame that rightly preserves its reflexivity. A familiar feature of love is that it involves an evaluative dependence; when I love someone, my well-being depends upon her life's going well. I argue that loving someone also involves a persistent tendency to *believe* that her life *is* going well, in the sense that she is a good person, that she is not prone to wickedness. Lovers are inclined, more strongly than they otherwise would be, to give their beloveds the moral benefit of the doubt. These two features of loving—an evaluative dependence and a persistent tendency to believe in the beloved's moral goodness—provide the conditions for a lover to experience shame when he discovers that his beloved has morally transgressed.

Keywords Love · Shame

1 Introduction: Understanding Love through Its Manifestations

It would seem that one of the best ways to understand the attitude of loving someone is to explore the ways in which one who loves is affected by the person he loves. Robert Nozick's often-discussed treatment of love in Chapter 8 of *The Examined Life* epitomizes this approach; at the beginning of his chapter, Nozick writes:

> What is common to all love is this: Your own well-being is tied up with that of someone (or something) you love. When a bad thing happens to a friend, it happens to her and you feel sad for her. When something bad happens to one you love, though, something bad also happens *to you*. (It need not be exactly the same bad thing. And I do not mean that one cannot also love a friend.) (Nozick 1989, 68)

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Nozick here focuses our attention on the difference between the ways we are affected by what happens to those we love from the ways we are affected by what happens to those we care less for. While we readily sympathize with our friends, something more happens in response to those we love. When you love someone, Nozick claims, you have taken her interests on as your own.

Much of the recent philosophical discussion of love has followed this methodology, exploring the ways in which what happens to the beloved manifests itself in the lover. While I will do the same in this paper, I will stray from much of the recent discussion by focusing not upon what *happens to* the beloved, but upon what she *does*; I will be exploring one way in which a beloved's actions can affect her lover, namely by bringing about his shame. In addition, my explanation of this phenomenon will involve a departure from recent writing on love; while most writers have focused on the affective and conative elements involved in loving someone, I will argue that loving someone also has a cognitive, or doxastic, element. To love someone, I will suggest, involves a persistent expectation that she lives as a good person does.[1] What follows will include no substantial discussion of any of the main approaches to love. As far as I can tell, the major approaches to love can incorporate beloved-induced shame and the explanation I defend of it.

2 Being Ashamed of a Beloved

In speaking of a lover and his beloved, as I will do throughout this paper, I am thinking of any instance of one person's loving another: romantic love, love between friends, and the whole range of family loves, including sibling love, parental or grandparental love, and children's love of their parents. As will become clear, my discussion does not apply to those beloved individuals whom we see as exempt from judgement for wrongdoing, such as very young children, the mentally ill, or animals. The feature of loving I will here defend is an aspect only of our love for autonomous persons.

Let us imagine a lover and his beloved, and that the beloved does something that the lover believes is immoral or unethical. This may be a wrongdoing that involves hurting someone else, like murdering, stealing from, or cheating on someone. Or it may involve what the lover takes to be a deeply bad life choice, like joining a neo-Nazi party, taking up prostitution, or marrying outside of her caste. Furthermore, it may be that the beloved does not agree with her lover that what she has done is wrong.

While any wrongdoing can be upsetting, we can predict that our lover will be more upset—more distressed, more anguished—at his beloved's wrongdoing, all things being equal, than he would be at the wrongdoing of a stranger or mere acquaintance. Loving involves something like the desire that one's beloved be a good person, and that she live a good life. If the lover did not experience anguish in learning of the beloved's wrongdoing, at least to more of an extent than we would expect were the beloved a stranger to, or disliked by, him, then we would begin to suspect that he did not really love her after all.

Pain, however, is only one unpleasant response that a lover may have to his beloved's wrongdoing or misguided life choice. He may also feel *ashamed* of his beloved in virtue of what she has done. Shame in response to another person's doings, or *other-induced* shame, is a familiar phenomenon. Most of us have experienced shame not only in response to what we ourselves have done, but also in response to what others have done. It is one species of other-

[1] To aid clarity, I have (arbitrarily) chosen to use male pronouns to refer to lovers and female pronouns to refer to beloveds.

induced shame, that induced by *the immoral actions of one's beloved*, that I seek to explain, and to use that explanation to unearth what I think is a significant feature of love. I will return to other kinds of other-induced shame in Section 5 below.

The dominant account of shame in current English-language philosophy portrays it as a reflexive response to what one sees as one's own shortcomings. Michelle Mason summarizes this position thus:

> To experience shame is to experience oneself as diminished in merited esteem on the ground that one has violated some legitimate ideal of character. (Mason 2010, 417–18)[2]

To feel ashamed of oneself, on this familiar account of it, is to see oneself as not meeting one's ideals, whether they be moral or non-moral. I experience shame with respect to who I am, not about anyone else.[3] Accordingly, the phenomenon of other-induced shame provides a *prima facie* problem for the dominant reflexive account of shame. If shame is something that I feel towards myself, how is it that I can be said to be ashamed of someone else? Other-induced shame, however, has been strangely neglected by philosophers concerned with shame. I know of only one substantial discussion of other-induced shame, in a recent paper on the nature of love by Bennett Helm. (Helm 2009) Like me, Helm is interested in beloved-induced shame because he recognizes that one prominent sphere in which other-induced shame arises is that of love. Furthermore, like me, Helm thinks that understanding other-induced shame between lovers may tell us something central about love. In spite of these points of agreement, I disagree with Helm's explanation of the phenomenon of beloved-induced shame.

In his paper, Helm discusses beloved-induced instances of both pride and shame, and he claims that they should straight-forwardly lead us to reject reflexive accounts of those emotions. He writes that

> To understand pride and shame as essentially reflexive prohibits our making sense of an interesting and important class of cases in which we are proud or ashamed of other people.

At least some cases of beloved-induced pride and shame, Helm argues, are non-reflexive. In such cases, when someone else's actions bring about my shame, my shame is not, in Mason's words, a matter of experiencing myself 'as diminished in merited esteem'. About such cases of shame, Helm thinks, it is more accurate to say that I 'share' another person's pride or shame. (Helm 2009, 49)

Helm imagines feeling pride as his wife becomes proficient on the bagpipes, an instrument—we are to imagine—he greatly dislikes. 'My pride in my wife for winning a bagpipe competition,' he writes, 'is *non-reflexive*.' His pride in her is not about his values per se, but rather about his 'identifying' with her and her values. It is a distinguishing feature of love, Helm claims, that the lover 'non-reflexively identifies' with his beloved; in loving her he 'takes her identity to heart'. One manifestation of this is that the lover comes to value something 'for [the beloved's] sake, as a part of [his] commitment to the import she has to [him]'. As a consequence of this change in values, Helm argues, it becomes possible for the lover to share the beloved's pride or shame. 'Thus', he concludes, for someone to feel

[2] Mason notes that a related position is endorsed by many writers, among them John Rawls, Arnold Isenberg, Gabriele Taylor, and David Velleman.

[3] In this paper, I will ignore certain features that are often attributed to shame—such as the presence of a real or imagined audience—which are not crucial to my aims here.

beloved-induced pride involves his being 'pleased' by the beloved's 'notably upholding [her] values', while to feel beloved-induced shame involves being 'pained by' the beloved's 'notably flouting [her] values.'[4]

The central feature of Helm's bagpipe case is that he finds himself feeling pleased by his wife's proficiency on an instrument he loathes. This is appropriate; love leads us to be open to what our beloveds do, and for our values to tend to come into accord with theirs. The conclusion Helm draws from this is that he shares his wife's pride in winning a bagpipe competition; her pride, via his love for her, becomes his pride. However, I suspect that, if Helm *really* does feel pride in virtue of his wife's achievement, then his doing so is a function of his own values independent of her. In fact, this would seem to be true in this case; after all she has *won a competition* and *learned to play a difficult musical instrument*.[5] Indeed, his case would not be plausible at all if her achievement were one whose value he did not share: if his wife proudly informed him that she had spent her day off counting the leaves on the large magnolia tree near their house, I seriously doubt that he would be inclined to feel any pride in her achievement.

The central place of the *lover's* own values is just as evident with cases of beloved-induced shame. As we saw above, Helm writes that 'to feel shame is to be pained by someone's notably flouting his [own] values.' (Helm 2009, 51) However, when I am ashamed of you, it is not because you have flouted *your* values, but because you have flouted *mine*, or, at least, the values that I took us to share. A case of shame analogous to Helm's bagpipe case (as he intended it) would involve the beloved doing something that betrays her own values, values that the lover does not share (again, except via his love for her). We can easily imagine a beloved's being ashamed of her body, her accent, her lack of education, her poor attendance at church, or her occupation, while her lover does not share her view that these features of her person warrant less esteem. In cases such as these, I struggle to make sense of the lover's feeling shame as well, of his 'sharing' her shame. In virtue of his love for her, he will pity her, sympathize with her, or even empathize with her, but if he does not share the values that have led her to be ashamed of herself, I cannot see why anyone would describe him as feeling other-induced shame. If this is right, it looks as if beloved-induced shame is going to be the result of the beloved flouting the *lover's* values, which points us back toward an account of beloved-induced shame that preserves a reflexive element: my connection to you is such that your violating my (or our) values leads me, in Mason's words, 'to experience myself as diminished in merited esteem'.

Furthermore, it is worth remembering that the phenomenology of shame—both self-induced and other-induced—indicates its reflexive nature. It has often been noticed that feeling shame brings about the urge to conceal oneself, to hide oneself from the world. To feel shame is to have a sense of being exposed. However, if Helm is right, if I am 'sharing' your shame, then it would seem that the proper reaction would be for me to want to hide *you*. But this does not seem to fit the phenomenology of beloved-induced shame: when I am ashamed of you, my urge will be to hide myself from those who I will see as standing in judgment. When your actions bring shame upon me in our small town, my response will not be to keep you off Main Street, but to avoid it myself. An ashamed lover does not want to hide his beloved, he wants to hide himself (although he may also wish to get his beloved off Main Street in order to prevent her from repeating her shameful actions). Again, this indicates that the content of beloved-induced shame is, contrary to what Helm would have us believe, reflexive. Helm could deny this, and suggest that the lover feels the beloved's

[4] All quotations in this paragraph are from Helm 2009, Sections 3–5.
[5] I thank Ingrid Albrecht for pointing this out to me.

shame, and that feeling her shame feels, to him, as if it were his own. But in making this move, Helm would be committing himself to the peculiar thought that beloved-induced shame is, strictly-speaking, false, a kind of pretense. In taking on the beloved's shame, the lover simulates or replicates her shame; beloved-induced shame would not, according to Helm, be sincere, even though it was a response generated by sincere caring.

These considerations suggest that we should look for an account of beloved-induced shame that preserves the reflexivity of shame. A reflexive account of beloved-induced shame will explain why the lover who is ashamed of his beloved feels not *her* shame, but a shame *of his own*. This does not mean that such an account is either simple or easy to come by, for it is far from obvious why it is that my loving someone provides the enabling conditions for *her* actions to cause *my* reflexive shame. I will defend such an account in the next two sections; my suggestion will be that a lover's shame can be self-directed because his loving her involves what I will call a 'moral endorsement' of her. In contrast to Helm, my aim is only to explain *moral* beloved-induced shame (although I will return non-moral beloved-induced shame in Section 5).

3 The Persistent Belief in the Beloved's Goodness

3.1 The Phenomenon

I am sympathetic to Helm's thought that it is helpful to understand loving as, at least in part, a matter of forming *commitments* to one's beloved. By exploring the nature and extent of the lover's commitments to his beloved, it is likely that we will better understand love. I am also sympathetic to Helm's claim that a lover's *axiological commitment* to the beloved's well-being is perhaps the most central commitment that the lover makes. This value commitment manifests itself in strong affective and conative responses to what the beloved does or has happen to her. The lover comes to have an investment in the beloved; the beloved's well-being becomes, as it were, one of the lover's own projects. We might think of this commitment as a kind of *internalized dependence* upon those we love, since in coming to love, a lover's well-being becomes dependent upon that of the beloved.

What I now want to add to this is that lovers also have a tendency to form certain *doxastic* commitments about those they love. This is not without precedent. David Velleman's account of love prominently includes a doxastic element. 'Love', Velleman writes, is 'the awareness of value inhering in its object' (Velleman 1999, 360); loving someone involves seeing her 'pricelessness', her 'specialness', her preciousness. The doxastic aspect of loving that I will be defending here is different from, although not a competitor to, the one Velleman defends; it may be that both are necessary features of love. My claim is not that the lover sees the beloved as valuable, but that he has a tendency to see her as *good*. One feature of loving involves seeing one's beloved as being a good person, as broadly living the right sort of life, and as having a decent character. This is not to say that the lover will *publicly* vouch for the goodness of the beloved, but he will have a tendency to believe in her goodness whether he asserts it or not. In the remainder of this section, I will clarify my description of this tendency, and cite evidence that it exists; in the next section, I will spell out its role in beloved-induced shame.

I do not endorse the claim that another person's goodness is what has *motivated* me to love her, nor do I claim that a beloved's goodness is the *object* of a lover's love for her. In Socrates' speech in Plato's *Symposium*, both of these thoughts are defended by Diotima. In her deeply-moralized account of love, love is both motivated by and targeted at goodness in

the beloved. 'Every desire for good things or for happiness,' she says, 'is "the supreme and treacherous love" in everyone,' and even more categorically, she says 'What everyone loves is really nothing other than the good.'[6] As I will point out later, the claim I defend in this paper would be welcomed by someone who endorses an account like Diotima's. My claim, however, is a good deal weaker; it is not that believing in the goodness of a beloved either motivates or embodies the object of all love, but rather, and quite simply, that it is a *feature* of all love.

I by no means wish to suggest that a lover believes that his beloved is good in all ways or all situations. Endorsing the goodness of a beloved is not inconsistent with seeing her as slow, boring, or unmotivated. Loving someone is not in tension with recognizing the limitations of her capabilities.[7] However, it is in tension with fully acknowledging her *moral* faults. As Roger Scruton—the only writer I have found who explicitly discusses this feature of loving[8]—writes, as someone who loves you,

> I can make allowances for your laziness, your selfishness, your lack of essential refinements. But can I make allowances for your cowardice, your viciousness, your character, say, as a murderer or rapist?
> The answer is surely 'no' … (Scruton 1986, 240)

Taken out of context, this passage from Scruton looks like an outright denial that lovers can recognize their beloved's vices or misguided life choices. However, neither Scruton nor I would want to deny this. It is *of course* possible to recognize that one's beloved has done wrong; seeing those we love not making the right sort of life choices can be a deep source of pain, strife, and—the topic of this paper—shame.

My claim is that loving someone involves or entails believing that she is a *good person*. This is not the same thing as believing that she always has or always will *act well*. Nonetheless, believing that someone is a good person involves an *expectation* that she will act well. Furthermore, when that expectation is not met—when one discovers that she has acted badly—her doing so can challenge one's belief that she is a good person. Accordingly, because lovers believe that their beloveds are good persons, they have *persistent expectations* that their beloveds will act well, and when those expectations are not met, their love can be challenged. Loving someone thus creates something like a barrier or impediment to accepting that she has done wrong. This barrier will be weaker or stronger in proportion to the strength of the lover's love and the severity of the beloved's wrongdoing. At one end of the spectrum, a deeply loving spouse or parent will have an extremely difficult time accepting that his life partner or child has committed a crime that he sees as heinous. At the other end of the spectrum, even a new romantic lover requires more evidence to believe that his partner has lied or broken her promise than he does to believe that a stranger or acquaintance has done the same.

I do not deny that a lover can fully recognize that his beloved has done wrong, nor do I deny that a wrongdoer—even a very serious wrongdoer—can be loved. The claim is rather that it is difficult to truly love a serious wrongdoer while being clear-sighted about the extent of her wrongdoing and her responsibility for it. Lovers have a belief that those they love are good persons, and that inclines them to a defeasible but persistent tendency to believe that

[6] Plato, *Symposium*, 205D and E. I am using the translation by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff: Plato 1989.

[7] It is worth noting, however, that several social psychology experiments suggest that lovers tend to (non-morally) vouch for their beloveds in a wide range of ways. See, e.g., Hall and Taylor 1976.

[8] Scruton 1986, Chapter 8. Also see Hooker 1999; Hooker defends an interpretation of Aristotle on friendship in which 'part of [a] deeper kind of friendship … is recognition of the other person's virtue.'

their beloveds are not inclined or prone to wrongdoing. It is this belief, in combination with the evaluative element of loving, which explains the shame that a lover feels in the face of his beloved's wrongdoing.

3.2 Evidence

Perhaps the simplest evidence for a lover's persistent tendency to believe that his beloved is a good person derives from the expectations that those we love have of us. At the beginning of a paper called 'Friendship and Belief', Simon Keller lists what he calls 'some familiar platitudes about friendship': 'Good friends believe in each other; they give each other the benefit of the doubt; they see each other in the best possible light.' (Keller 2004, 330)[9] He continues:

> The truth contained in these platitudes, I think, is that when good friends form beliefs about each other, they sometimes respond to considerations that have to do with the needs and interests of their friends, not with aiming at the truth, and that is part of what makes them good friends. (Keller 2004, 330)

Keller's observation is true of those who love as well as those who are friends. We expect those who love us to think well of us; we expect our lovers to give us the benefit of doubt. This applies, primarily, to our moral lives. We expect those who love us, at a minimum, to require stronger evidence to believe that we have done wrong, and we justifiably feel disappointed and betrayed if they do not. We expect our lovers to expect us to be good.[10] That there is such a pervasive expectation (on the part of beloveds) is strong reason to believe that it is met (by lovers).

While the fact that beloveds insist that their lovers see them as good strongly suggests that lovers do so, this by itself does not tell us how lovers' pervasive expectations are manifested and sustained. If lovers must believe that their beloveds are good persons, and if it follows from this that believing that one's beloved has done wrong creates a *pro tanto* challenge to a lover's love, then we would predict that lovers would have various ways of protecting themselves from the tension between loving and fully acknowledging the immorality of what one's beloved has done. This prediction is indeed met; love brings with it mechanisms for resolving, as Scruton calls it, the 'conflict between love and esteem'. (Scruton 1986, 240) These mechanisms come into play when we find out that someone we love has done something immoral, or as we come to love someone we have always known to be immoral. The existence of these mechanisms is, it seems to me, the strongest evidence that there is a barrier to loving someone and accepting that she has done wrong.

One way to avoid loving someone and believing that she has done wrong would be to no longer love her. The possibility of doing this is one of the themes of Bernard Schlink's novel *The Reader*. (Schlink 1997)[11] The novel is told from the viewpoint of Michael, a German born soon after World War II. Much of the novel is about Michael's attempt to come to grips

[9] A similar position is defended in Stroud 2006.

[10] Keller describes these expectations as embodying *norms* of friendship, and most of Keller's paper is a discussion of the potential conflict between epistemic norms and the doxastic norms of friendship. While I am sympathetic to much of what Keller says, I think that he is wrong to claim that this is a matter of a conflict of *norms*. Friendship and love do not provide us with *reasons* to believe; rather, the effect that loving has on believing in the goodness of the beloved must be a surreptitious, sub-intentional effect. I argue for this (without explicit reference to Keller's paper) in Jones 2004, Section 4.

[11] It was in reading Schlink's novel that I first came to think about the topic of this paper.

with the previous generation's role in the war and the atrocities it involved. Looking back on his time at university, he recalls:

> I envied other students back then who had dissociated themselves from their parents and thus from the entire generation of perpetrators, voyeurs and the willfully blind, accommodators and accepters …

At work here is the tension that many Germans in Michael's generation apparently felt in both loving their parents and recognizing their role in the Holocaust. Michael recalls that some of his peers tried to relieve the tension by abandoning or weakening their relationships with their parents. Michael goes on, however, to question whether those who took this route were successful, whether their attempts to dissociate themselves were just 'mere rhetoric: sounds and noise that were supposed to drown out the fact that their love for their parents made them irrevocably complicit in their crimes'.[12] Michael's suspicions are no doubt well-grounded, at least with respect to many instances or kinds of love. In attempting to resolve the tension between loving and believing that one's beloved has done wrong, some loves will persist, even if the lover distances himself from his beloved. 'Where love wars with esteem', Scruton points out, 'love may predominate.' (Scruton 1986, 240)

That said, there is a danger of underestimating the propensity for love to lessen or disappear in the face of immorality. In his discussion of the frequent 'unworthiness' of love, Harry Frankfurt writes,

> If my children should turn out to be ferociously wicked … I might perhaps recognize that my love for them was regrettable. But I suspect that … I would continue to love them anyhow. (Frankfurt 2004, 39–40)

Far be it from me to question the durability of Frankfurt's love for his children, but I do wonder whether his imagination regarding the 'ferocious wickedness' of his children might be failing him here. What if he discovered his son violently raping someone? What if he discovered his daughter soberly bludgeoning a dog to death? These are unpleasant thoughts, but 'ferocious wickedness' is an unpleasant business, and I do not believe that Frankfurt (or anyone else) should be *at all* confident in predicting that his love would hold up in the face of such discoveries.

In any event, lovers threatened by the tension between loving and acknowledging the immorality of their beloveds have available alternative means by which they can avoid or resolve the tension, namely as the result of a weakening or elimination of the recognition that their beloveds are immoral. These are ways in which lovers continue to believe that their beloveds are good persons even though they appear to have acted badly, ways in which they can deny that their beloveds have acted badly or distance their beloveds from their actions. There are at least three ways in which lovers avoid fully recognizing the wrong of what their beloveds do.

Perhaps the most extreme is a matter of self-deception. A stock philosophical example, often trotted out in discussions of wishful thinking, involves a mother who cannot believe that her son has committed the crimes of which he is accused. The plausibility of the example trades upon the general thought that there is a tension between a mother's love of her son and the belief that he has committed some heinous crime. The example would have no grip in reality were we to replace the mother by a total stranger; if I have no relationship with someone, then there is, *mutatis mutandis*, no block to my believing that he has done something wrong. The explanation of this is what I am defending here: the mother's love for

[12] Schlink 1997, both quotations are from Part Three, Chapter One, 169.

her son involves a persistent tendency to believe in his goodness, and that tendency blocks her recognition of his wrongdoing.

Secondly, a lover can respond to his beloved's wrongdoing is by changing his mind about the *badness* of what the beloved has done. One way to do so is by 'playing down' the badness of what one's beloved has done. If I come to think that my beloved's action is not *really* all that bad, then the tension that I feel in loving her will dissipate. We readily recognize the phenomenon of the father responding to his delinquent son's behavior in this way, shrugging it off with a 'boys will be boys' response. The father does not *deny* the badness of his son's behavior, but he does 'make light of it'; he refuses to fully face its badness. By thinking that his son's action is not really all that bad—by dismissing it with a boys-will-be-boys response—the father can avoid the tension that would be experienced in taking to heart the harm that his son has caused, the wrong that he has perpetrated, or the kind of person he has become.[13]

A more extreme version of the same mechanism for avoiding the tension between loving and believing one's beloved is bad involves changing one's moral commitments. When the beloved 'cannot be moralized according to the old ideal', Scruton notes, it may be that a lover 'favours a new one.' (Scruton 1986, 235) One might wish to use this mechanism to describe the possibility—widely represented in US film and television—of families that are deeply involved in crime. My love for you, my husband or father, involved as you are in organized crime, may lead me to a distorted evaluation of your activities. Perhaps I am led to place the family in a central ethical position: killing or hurting someone is not wrong, if that person was outside the family and was endangering the family, because the family must be protected as a unit. In this way, I can continue loving you, as I think that your killing someone outside the family was, ultimately, the right thing to do. Scruton makes this same point when he writes that 'He who freely and happily loves a criminal is always capable of being himself an accomplice in crime.' (Scruton 1986, 240)[14] Given what Bonnie was herself capable of, we have no trouble understanding how she could love Clyde.

A third way in which a lover can respond to his beloved's apparently immoral action is perhaps the most common and familiar move, that of *explaining away* or *excusing* the badness of the beloved's actions. There are an extraordinary number of ways in which this can be done, and we are very adept at doing so. The beloved did not know what she was doing, she did not intend to cause harm, she was under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or she was led to do so by her friends. At their limit, such moves appeal to very distant conditions that, in spite of our not being able to clearly spell out their force, seem to us to distance the beloved from responsibility for the action, and thus, from wrongdoing itself: the beloved was neglected as a child, or she had no role models to give her a moral education. These are all ways of distancing the beloved from her wrongdoing and resolving any tension we might feel in loving her.

A final bit of evidence for my claim that lovers tend to see their beloveds as good is found not in the lover's or the beloved's point of view, but rather in the view from someone outside their relationship. Viewers of films with clear-cut villains—which include, perhaps most prominently, the genres of westerns, crime thrillers, and martial arts films—will know that the clear-cut villain cannot be shown as being loved. Early on in such films, the villain is usually shown committing an unequivocally heinous crime, and the plots of these films impel their viewers toward a state of satisfaction at the villain's eventual capture,

[13] I appeal to the phenomenon of 'playing down' the badness of something in order to explain our laughter at transgressions, in Jones 2011.

[14] A nice discussion of this phenomenon can be found in Cocking and Kennett 2000 Section 3.

punishment, or death. Accordingly, it is important for the progress of these films that they retain the audience's desire for the villain's defeat, punishment, or death. However, as we know from films that break out of these genres, to portray a villain or wrongdoer as being loved has a very different effect upon the viewer. The effect can be unsettling, as it is in *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1989), or it can verge on the comic, as it does in *Natural Born Killers* (1994). The upshot of introducing a character who loves the wrongdoer is that a narrative can no longer depend upon the spectator's desire for the wrongdoer's downfall. At least in part, the reason for this is that to see a 'villain' as being genuinely loved is to be in the presence of someone who believes in the villain's possession of a certain amount or a certain kind of goodness.[15] To see a villain loved is to see him as morally esteemed. As a consequence, seeing someone as being loved is irreconcilable with wholeheartedly seeing him *as a villain*. No matter what he has done, his villainy is undermined by the presence of a person who loves him, and who does not see him as a clear-cut villain.[16]

4 Accounting for a Lover's Shame

It looks, then, as if there are two very different commitments that lovers form toward their beloveds. The first, pointed out by Nozick, Helm, and many other writers on love, is that loving involves a kind of evaluative dependence upon the beloved. The lover incorporates the beloved's well-being into his own value system; if something significant happens to the beloved, it affects the lover's well-being. The second commitment, which I defended in the previous section, is doxastic; lovers tend to believe that their beloveds are good people.

By itself, neither of these commitments is enough to explain beloved-induced shame. When the beloved does wrong, the lover is shown to have a false belief: the beloved is, after all, capable of wrongdoing. But a false belief is not sufficient for feeling shame. When the beloved does wrong, the lover's own well-being is affected, for it is important to him that she lead a good life. But a lowering of one's well-being is not sufficient for shame; it would rather lead to sadness, distress, or pain. In combination, however, these two commitments can lead to shame, as together they amount to a particularly deep kind of *endorsement*: the lover believes *in* the beloved.[17] Loving someone, it appears, involves taking an attitude the content of which is something like 'This person is good, and her goodness is important to me, and whether or not my life goes well depends upon her goodness.' The lover *vouches* for his beloved with his belief that she is good *and* his placing his own well-being, as it were, at her mercy. He takes her to be good, and he stakes the goodness of his life on that of hers.

These conditions are sufficient[18] to result in a self-directed shame, in response to my lover's wrongdoing. A lover's shame is the result of her not living up to his endorsement, of her letting him down. It is worth recalling the self-directed account of shame that, as I argued

[15] I do not deny that other features of loving—e.g., the preciousness of the beloved to the lover—may be playing a role here as well.

[16] All of the evidence gathered in this sub-section, for my claim that lovers have a persistent expectation that their beloveds are good, is empirical, and so I have not shown that a lover who does not have such an expectation is not imaginable (or even possible). I suspect that we would be unwilling to attribute the mental state of loving to someone who does not manifest this expectation; arguing for this would go some way toward establishing the conceptual necessity of the claim I am defending, but I will not pursue such an argument here.

[17] My use of the word 'endorsement' in this paper, to describe an attitude that is part doxastic and part evaluative, differs from the dominant usage of that word—begun by Harry Frankfurt—in recent ethics. The attitude Frankfurt picks out with the word 'endorsement' is wholly evaluative; see Frankfurt 1988.

[18] I do not claim that they are necessary; it may be that some cases of other-induced shame do not involve a previous belief that the person I am ashamed of meets the norms she has now violated.

in Section 2, we should not give up; shame occurs when I fail, in some important way, to live up to my demands of myself. The reality of my behavior falls short of who I think that I should be; I am disappointed in myself. Beloved-induced shame occurs because when I come to love you my expectations of myself *incorporate* my expectations of you. This occurs because of the particularly deep kind of endorsement involved in loving you. In loving someone, my endorsement of her goodness has changed me into someone whose life goes well only when her life goes well. I *champion* her in virtue of her goodness, and when she acts badly, I—in virtue of that championing—do not live up to who I think I should be. In loving her I have backed a loser in the moral realm, and the result is my self-directed shame.

That it is the lover's endorsement of the beloved which is the source of the lover's shame is supported by the fact that something like shame can result when we endorse other persons outside of loving relationships. When a teacher endorses a student for a further degree or a job, or when a high-profile figure publicly endorses a political candidate, and he is subsequently let down by the student or candidate, the result can be that the teacher or the high-profile figure feels shame. Like the lover, the teacher and the public figure (if they are being sincere) have a belief in their students' or candidates' abilities. The endorser stands by his student or his preferred candidate, in that he is willing to vouch for her, and he cares that the student or candidate succeeds in what she is setting out to do. So, if the student or candidate disappoints in some serious way, this can come back to cause the teacher or public figure shame.

We must not take this analogy too far. Unlike loving someone, the endorsements of a teacher or public figure are necessarily public, and often the main thing that they are staking is their reputations. The endorsement that comes with loving someone is, in contrast, not necessarily public, and the lover's reputation is not the most important thing at stake in how his beloved leads her life. The lover stands with the beloved not in his role as teacher or public figure, but, we might say, as a human being. In loving someone, I have a tendency to believe not merely in, say, her academic capabilities, but in her goodness, and it is not just my reputation but my well-being in a broader sense which is dependent upon that person's continuing to be good. Nonetheless, the analogy is revealing; in both cases, it is the fact that one person—lover, teacher, public figure—is standing by and with another person that leaves the former susceptible to shame in virtue of how the latter behaves.

That a lover vouches for or endorses the beloved explains why beloved-induced moral shame is reflexive. In loving her, he has put himself on the line with her, and in virtue of this he is implicated in her wrongdoings. This is not to say that he *had a hand in* her wrongdoing, or even that he could have prevented it, anymore than the ashamed teacher had a hand in or could have prevented his ex-student's failure. In endorsing others, we make ourselves vulnerable to what they do without necessarily contributing to what they do. It would also be wrong to suggest that the ashamed lover does or should feel shame only for staking himself on the beloved; that is, that he should be ashamed for *loving a wrongdoer*. It may, indeed, be true that ashamed lovers sometimes regret *continuing to love* those who wrong, but this is a different matter from regretting the love one felt for her in the first place. In many cases, at least, I struggle to make sense of the latter response; I would not know what to make of someone who says that, after what his sister did, he regrets having loved her all those years they were growing up together.[19] In any event, and whatever regret one feels, a

[19] In the same way, I struggle to make sense of Frankfurt's suggestion that he would respond to his children's wickedness by coming to 'recognize that my love for them was regrettable.' (Frankfurt 2004, 39–40) There are many things that I can see regretting about one's children—how I raised them, what they did, who they became—but loving them is not one of them.

lover's shame is more basically directed at himself because of how his loving has changed him, that is, because it has changed him into someone whose endorsement has made it such that his life goes well only as long as his beloved is the good person his loving her needs her to be.

In describing an instance of beloved-induced shame, we sometimes say that a lover is 'ashamed of his beloved'. This way of speaking makes it seem as if beloved-induced shame is not reflexive after all, and that we should—with Helm—conceive of beloved-induced shame as non-reflexive. However, our ways of describing beloved-induced shame are not unambiguous. We say of someone that 'she brought shame upon her family' or that 'she brought shame to her father'. Indeed, synonyms for 'bringing shame upon' tend to be words like 'disgrace', 'dishonor' or 'humiliate', all of which suggest that the beloved is *subjecting* the lover to something. A lover's shame is, indeed, brought about by his beloved's actions, but this is not to say that the beloved is the *object* of the lover's shame. Rather, a lover's shame is better described not as being *of* his beloved, but rather *in virtue of* his beloved. Given how I feel for her, her actions have generated my disgrace. In the case of the academic or the public figure, it is his career or reputation that has been hurt. In the case of the lover, it is his moral being; because of his moral commitment to the beloved, his person—who and what he morally stands for—has suffered.

As indicated earlier, the fact that lovers have a persistent belief in the goodness of their beloveds readily brings to mind Socrates' speech on love in the *Symposium*. The view of love defended by Diotima, and endorsed by Socrates, places the desire for goodness at its center; loving is, at bottom, motivated by the desire to possess good things. One manifestation of this, she says, is that a lover takes no 'joy in what belongs to him personally unless by "belonging to me" he means "good" …' [205E]. I have defended something related to this latter thought; to believe that someone is not good interferes, we might say, with one's capacity to love her. Diotima's theory of love offers a straightforward and simple explanation of this feature of loving: given that lovers love goodness, their coming to believe that what they love is not good will negatively affect their love. Perhaps regrettably, I cannot bring myself to accept Diotima's lofty view that 'what everyone loves is really nothing other than the good' [205E]. I have an enduring suspicion that what moves us to love is rarely so admirable. Nonetheless, those who are more tempted than I am by Diotima's position should find much that is amenable in the present paper.

In sum, I have been arguing that we should conceive of beloved-induced shame as self-directed, in virtue of the fact that the lover has staked himself with his beloved. The lover ties his life to that of the beloved, in the sense of it mattering deeply about how her life goes (this is the affective element); furthermore, and in the context of that mattering, he bears witness to her (this is the doxastic element). He not only has a doxastic commitment to her not being the sort of person who does what he thinks is wrong, he stakes his own well-being on her not being that sort of person.

5 Non-Moral and Group-Induced Shame

The account of beloved-induced moral shame defended in the previous sections does not explain two other kinds of other-induced shame—beloved-induced non-moral shame and group-induced shame.

First, we can be ashamed of non-moral features of ourselves, like our bodies or our lack of education, and we are similarly susceptible to shame in virtue of non-moral shortcomings we perceive in those we love. Think of the first-generation university student who is

ashamed of the lack of education or poverty of his parents. My account of beloved-induced shame requires the persistent belief that the beloved is a good person, but it is implausible to think that such a belief would play a role in non-moral beloved-induced shame. As a consequence, my account of beloved-induced moral shame does not allow me to explain analogous cases of non-moral shame.

For the same reason, my account does not allow me to explain group-induced (moral or non-moral) shame. Many groups that we belong to do not matter to us. I belong, for example, to the world-wide group of people who keep a fern in their bathrooms, but I doubt that any of the other members of that group could bring shame on me *qua* our membership in that group. However, I am vulnerable to shame in virtue of some of the other, more important, groups or institutions to which I belong. It is possible that what a fellow member of my country, culture, race, club, workplace, or family does can bring about my shame. In the light of the behavior of one of my departmental colleagues, of someone who lives in my town, or of a leader of my country, it is conceivable that I could feel what Jeffrey Blustein calls 'membership shame', shame brought about in virtue of the actions of a fellow member of the same group. (Blustein 2008, Ch. 3 Sec. 7) However, it is clearly wrong to think that I have a prior and persistent belief that each member of such groups is morally good, and so, again, my account cannot explain this kind of other-induced shame.

The fact that I cannot use my account to explain these kinds of other-induced shame could be seen as a concern, as it opens the door to an explanation of beloved-induced moral shame that could offer a unifying explanation of all types of other-induced shame. In particular, one might think that the correct account of group-induced shame could also be used to explain both non-moral and moral beloved-induced shame. Beloved-induced shame, one might argue, is a special case of membership-shame. When two people love each other, they thereby form a group, a group that is of central importance to each of their lives.[20] Accordingly, when I love someone, she—as a member of an important group to me—can bring about my shame in virtue of her moral or non-moral shortcomings. So, beloved-induced shame can be seen as arising in virtue of group-membership, and group-membership would provide the 'mechanism' for understanding all cases of other-induced shame. Because it would appear to offer a unifying account all cases of other-induced shame, it could be argued, such an account is preferable to mine as an account of beloved-induced moral shame.[21]

While it may be true that there is a way—like that sketched in the previous paragraph—of theoretically unifying all types of other-induced shame, this possibility does not nullify the significance of the claims I have been defending in this paper. Even if being in a loving relationship with someone can be appropriately described as 'forming a significant group' with her, and even if seeing love in that way allows us to see beloved-induced shame as a species of membership shame, we would still want to be able to explain how it is that being in a loving relationship can generate the kind of group that can generate membership shame. As noted above, not all group-membership leaves us susceptible to membership shame; more importantly, membership shame is generated by a wide range of mechanisms. My country, my workplace, and those I love, for example, matter to me in widely different ways (even if they each can be said to contribute to my 'identity'), and so the mechanisms by which my fellow citizens, my colleagues, and my loved ones can bring shame upon me will vary as well. As a consequence, even if each of these—including the latter—turns out to be a

[20] This is a version of the so-called union view of love, defended by, among others, Robert Nozick 1989, Robert Solomon 1988, and Marilyn Friedman 1998.

[21] Thanks to Kate Abramson, Gary Foster, and Thad Metz for pressing this objection on me in different ways.

species of group shame, an account like that I have been defending in this paper will be needed in order to fully explain a lover's shame.

The importance of there being different mechanisms by which other-induced shame is generated comes into clear focus when we look at family members bringing shame upon each other. If my sister, for example, does something immoral, and her doing so results in my shame, there seem to be two different stories to tell about the origin of my shame. If I am not that close to my sister, then it is likely that my shame should be explained in virtue of her being a member of my immediate family; her actions, I might say, have brought shame upon the whole family, the whole group of us. On the other hand, if I am close to my sister, it is likely that my love for her has brought about my shame; my concern that she lead a good life and my belief that she is a good person—both of which, I have argued, are features of love—will be responsible for the shame that her actions have aroused. Even if both kinds of shame can be seen, from a certain distance, as species of membership shame, my love for my sister plays a central role in generating my shame in the second case. It would be surprising, in the light of the considerations of the previous two sections, if my love for my sister were not crucial to the shame her actions have caused me.

6 Conclusion: The Value of Being Loved

What does the claim that I have defended in this paper tell us about what love does for us, about what it adds to our lives? One source of the value of being loved emerges straightforwardly from my discussion. We want to be seen as someone who is good; we want our goodness to be seen and acknowledged. Being loved, it would seem, is at least in part valuable because those who love us, in so far as they love us, see us as good people. It is worth pointing out, however, that to be consistently seen as good will not always be to the beloved's advantage. Situations may arise, especially in parent/child relations, in which it would be better for a lover to be *clear-sighted* about the beloved's moral faults, rather than giving her the benefit of the doubt. In such situations, it would be better for the beloved if the lover could fully acknowledge the beloved's vices and help her correct them. If the main claim of this paper is right, however, a lover's adhering to the norms of love may conflict with his clear-sightedness about his beloved's moral shortcomings, and, thus, the beloved's being loved may not always be in her best interests. Loving someone, it would seem, may not be the state most conducive for making her a better person.[22]

Amélie Rorty suggests that one of the main benefits we seek from love is to reduce our vulnerability. 'Because those who delight in us,' she writes, 'seem to vanquish our sense of vulnerability, we think of them as among our strongest protections in the world.' (Rorty 1988, 127–8) As a claim about *being loved*, Rorty may be right; it may be that we see ourselves as less vulnerable when we are loved. If the argument of this paper is right, however, there is a strong sense in which *loving* someone puts us at even more of a risk than we otherwise are. In the first place, the lover's interests incorporate many interests of the beloved, such that when something bad happens to her, as Nozick puts it, the result is that something bad happens to the lover. Furthermore, as I have been arguing, the lover is vulnerable not only in virtue of what happens to the beloved, but also in virtue of what the beloved does. As someone who loves you, and thus endorses you, your actions leave me

[22] This is not to say that other features that contingently accompany X's loving Y are, *ceteris paribus*, conducive to making Y a better person, such as X's knowing Y well. I thank Samantha Vice and Lucy Allais for, respectively, bringing the two points of this paragraph to my attention.

susceptible to having a lowered sense of my own moral worth. Rather than being made less vulnerable by the beloved, it would seem that the lover's zone of vulnerability expands to incorporate her.

This same point can be made if we expand on Gabriele Taylor's suggestion that shame is intimately related to self-respect:

> if someone has self-respect then under certain specifiable conditions he will be feeling shame. … a sense of value [which] is necessary for self-respect and so for shame … protects the self from what in the agent's own eyes is corruption … (Taylor 1985, 80–1)

If this is plausible, as I think it is, then another way of understanding the self-directed nature of a lover's shame would be by grasping how it is that the lover's self-respect becomes dependent upon the beloved's behavior. As I have been arguing in this paper, I think that this is a matter of the sincere endorsement that the lover undertakes with regard to his beloved. In coming to stand with the beloved, in tying his fortunes to hers, the lover takes a chance. In believing in her, the lover sticks his neck out, and one of the manifestations of this is the potential for shame. His beloved-induced shame painfully reveals to him that there is a failure here; he tied his fortunes to someone who did not come through. As a consequence, the lover who feels ashamed of his beloved is likely to ensure that it does not happen again, either by estranging himself from his beloved or by making it clear to her how her wrongdoing affected him. Just as with self-induced shame, beloved-induced shame functions to protect our self-respect; what is different in the case beloved-induced shame is that the lover has made himself more vulnerable, by stretching his self to encompass that of his beloved.

Vulnerability, however, need not be a bad thing. It is one side of a coin which has endeavor, venture, innovation, and advancement on the other side. If loving brings with it an increased vulnerability, it is because loving brings with it a greater opportunity of *expanding* our lives in such a way that another person's projects, and thus their successes (and not just their failures), can to some extent become our own.

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